The Life of Christ

BY

Chinese Artists

我主聖傳圖

華畫師描

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The Life of Christ

BY

Chinese Artists

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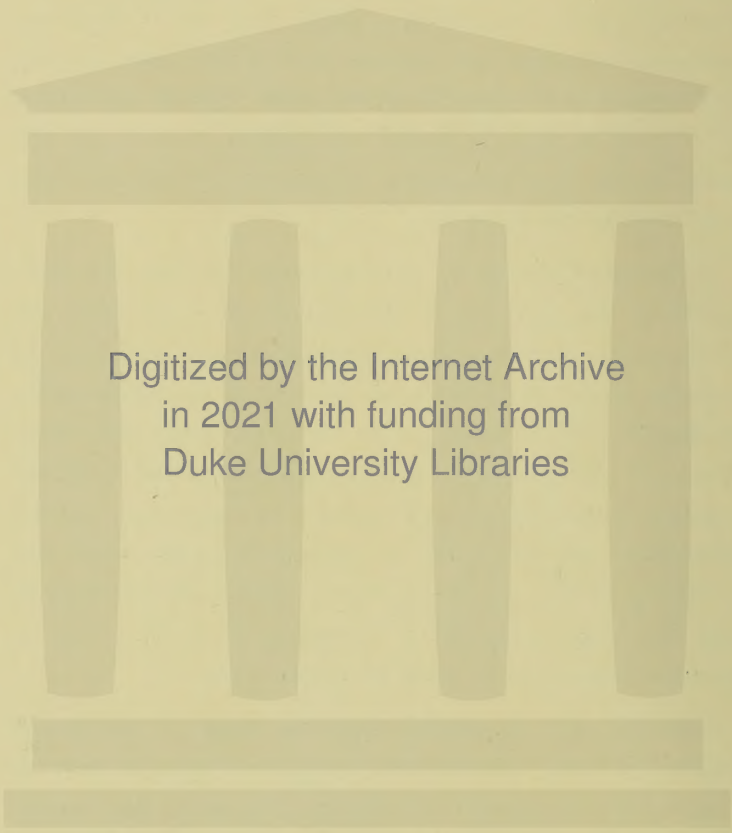
INTRODUCTION

HERE is a book which its owner will hesitate to lend, for fear of losing a treasured possession. This pictured life of Christ is the answer to an urgent need. We all know of Church men and Church women who have sought for worthy representation of the New Testament narrative, to help them at their prayers and their meditation. Here they are ! Numbers of teachers have longed for a picture book of the Gospel stories, straightforward in its appeal and free from " pretty sentimentality." Here it is ! It would be difficult to turn to any opening in the book's sequence of miracle or homely scene and not feel the better for it.

" The Life of Christ by Chinese Artists " comes the more gratefully at this time, when Western artists have either put the Bible stories aside as subjects for their art, or have blended with their work a harshness that wounds or a sentimentality that offends. The Chinese artist is never harsh and never sentimental. He catches the spirit of the Evangelists' narrative. The genius of the East lies in the power of suggestion : indeed impressionism was employed in China before the word had any meaning in the art of the West. Above all, the figures, though they may be placed in a setting of abrupt peaks or plunging torrents, carry a sense of infinite peace.

I should very regretfully lend my copy of this book. On the other hand, I should feel a niggard if I kept its serenity and its beauty to myself. I suggest, therefore, that copies of it will make magnificent presents, so that other Western Christians may have the chance of turning its pages and of being entranced, as I have already been entranced, by its rare insight and fine workmanship.

ROSAMUND ESSEX.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ABOUT THE PICTURES

WAR in China has made it impossible to find out many details about this series of pictures. They are a small selection from a large number of photographs sent from Peking. The originals are believed to be in churches throughout China or in private possession. All are paintings on silk, carried out in the delicate colours and with the fineness of touch so characteristic of Chinese art.

They are the work of different artists, as can be seen from the varying signatures. The characters at the side of the picture give its subject and the artist's name is in a square below. An Eastern artist rarely uses his own name on his work, therefore the signatures here tell little or nothing of the painters' identity.

It is said that a non-Christian who undertook a commission to paint a series of pictures of Gospel incidents was converted by his study of Christ's life. It has not been possible to verify the details or even to discover to which pictures the story refers, but there seems little doubt of its truth. Certainly the pictures are painted with rare delicacy and instinctive reverence.

Nearly every picture includes a tree, very often the bamboo so characteristic of China, and those which have no tree are noticeably more Western in design. Probably these artists are pupils of monks from the West. The richness of detail in many of the pictures will repay close study, especially these opposite pages 8, 30, 32 and 48.

Christ is generally shown in the surroundings of well-to-do Chinese life, for many artists would feel it irreverent to picture the Lord in poverty. So the House at Bethany and the Upper Room of the Last Supper are richly furnished.

There is no picture of the Ascension, and the search for one has so far been unsuccessful.

It is hoped that other books of Our Lord's Parables and Miracles and incidents from the Acts of the Apostles will be published later, and that in them it will be possible to include the many details of the artists and their work which are lacking here.

E.F.

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AND THE ANGEL came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

THERE WAS NO ROOM for them in the inn.

太倉陸鴻年敬繪

AND, LO, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them. . . . And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

乙亥六月
陳路加畫

AND THEY came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel.

AND WHEN they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him.

第涤徐清華

WHEN he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.

THEY found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

緣督

AND IT CAME TO PASS in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptised of John in Jordan.

嶺南陳緣督敬寫

JESUS saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

SIR, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?

太倉陸鴻年敬繪

WHEN SIMON PETER saw it he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

THERE is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes.

AND he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea.

AND SUDDENLY, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

陳緣豐敬寫

AND THEY brought young children to him that he should touch them.

AND Martha had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving.

THEY CAST their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

乙未八月
陳洪綬寫

AFTER THAT he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet.

AND WHEN the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him, and he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, saying This is my body which is given for you.

AND he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.

THEN SAID JESUS, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

I N R I

JESUS saith unto her, Woman why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?

AND WHEN the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. . . . And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them.

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